

In early June 2006, the Vermont Department of Health initiated an investigation of health concerns among employees of the Bennington State Office Building. The primary health concern was identified as sarcoidosis – a disease characterized by inflammation in one or more organs. The cause of sarcoidosis is not known, although treatments are available. Sarcoidosis is not a type of cancer.

Following is an update on the progress of the investigation.

### **Employee Health Survey**

On August 15, a team of investigators from the Vermont Department of Health administered a survey to current employees of the Bennington State Office Building. The purpose of the survey was to collect information on the health status of employees and to identify where in the building the employees work.

We are thrilled to report that more than 60 percent of employees completed the survey. This is an excellent response rate and the Health Department greatly appreciates the cooperation and participation of employees.

**For any current employee who was not available on August 15, you can still be included in the survey.** Please contact Sue Nutting at 802-442-8138 for further information. It is important that all surveys be completed and mailed to the Health Department by August 30.

Information collected from the survey is being analyzed by the investigators. This process will include comparing the health status of employees, based on the section of the building where they work. It will also compare the health status of employees to national occupational health data.

A health survey of former employees will also be conducted. The team of investigators from the Health Department will determine how and to whom the survey will be administered. The survey will be mailed within the next several weeks.

### **Building Inspection and Environmental Testing**

On August 7, investigators from the Vermont Department of Health, along with staff from Buildings and General Services (BGS), a representative from the Vermont State Employees Association (VSEA), and staff from ATC Associates, Inc. (a private consultant hired by BGS), conducted a walk-through inspection of the building. This inspection was meant to assess the condition of the building, identify locations where environmental testing should be done, and identify specific locations that could benefit from cleaning, repair or other remediation.

Starting August 23, ATC Associates, Inc. will perform environmental sampling within the building. Sampling locations have been determined based on preliminary findings from the health survey and input from VSEA and employee representatives. All samples will be collected by ATC Associates, Inc. and sent

to a private laboratory for analysis.

This sampling will include the following:

- Multiple real-time air quality measurements and continuous monitoring for carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, relative humidity, temperature and particulate matter.
- Twelve samples taken from carpeting for mold and bacteria
- Six wipe samples for heavy metals and a pesticide.

Based on the August 7 walk-through inspection of the building, there is no evidence to suggest that relocation of employees is necessary at this time, but we will continue to reassess the need to relocate employees. The investigation is still ongoing, however, and there are still many employees who have not completed the health survey.

#### **For More Information**

We will keep you updated with new information as this investigation continues. Meanwhile, if you have any questions about the health survey or environmental sampling and testing, feel free to contact the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7240.

A final report will be available in October. This report will include the results of the health survey and the environmental testing as well as a series of recommendations.